

IRONHORSE
Golf Club



GOLF COURSE COMMITTEE

**Minutes of May 18, 2017
5:30 P.M. – Ironhorse Golf Course**

Members attending: Dick Fuller (Chair), Mark Bodine, Alec Weinberg, and Tommy Davidson

Member absent: Dr. Gregory Peppes and Leo Morton

Troon Management Staff: Troy Newport and James Kennedy

Council Liaisons attending: Jim Rawlings and Chuck Sipple

Staff attending: Chris Claxton and Dalnita Holland

Chair Fuller called the meeting to order at 5:56 p.m.

Alec Weinberg made a motion to approve the February 23, 2017 meeting minutes. Marc Bodine seconded the motion. The minutes were approved unanimously.

I. Clubhouse Expansion

Troy shared what the progress is of the new space and what remains to be completed. The first date of use for the facility will be May 19. Troy also presented what the capabilities will be for the new AV equipment that will be installed and what was enhanced on the existing system that is designed to work with the new. The AV will be a significant and much needed addition and will really make a difference when hosting large golf events.

Chris reported the new tables and chairs for the space have been ordered and should arrive in the next couple of weeks.

Troy reported that the existing bathrooms are also currently being remodeled as a scheduled project, not part of this project.

Alec asked how much of the space would be open on a normal day-to-day operation.

Troy stated that the space is open, when not in use or already set for an event. People can also go out on the deck and enjoy a drink or take food out from the grill if they would like to.

Council Liaison Sipple asked if the staffing in the kitchen would stay the same.

Troy stated that it would, with the exception of hiring a part-time employee to manage the new space for banquets.

Tommy stated that they is a phone down on #9 where golfers can call in an order ahead of time.

Troy reported that you could now order food directly from the golf carts, which is a great feature.

II. General Operations Report

Troy reported overall rounds for the period January through April were down 780 vs. prior year, representing about a 16% decrease. This is primarily due to weather conditions in March and April. The total facility revenue was down by only 5% for the same period. Operating expenses are in line with prior year, keeping in mind that there was no GM salary expense in 2016 until late March.

Triple Crown passes started off slow but have now surpassed 2015 numbers and getting close to 2016 numbers. Leawood residents represent a little under 50% of pass holders.

Council Liaison Sipple asked how many are new bodies.

Troy responded that there are two of the seventy, which is typical of the history of the program.

Council Liaison Sipple asked about the posting of the payments in regards to timing.

Troy reported that they are now posted when they are received.

Council Liaison Sipple asked if this is why revenue is down only by 5%

Troy stated that he did not think so; there was more golf shop revenue (lessons, etc.) during this period, even though greens fees were down.

Troy reported that staff has booked nearly \$125,000 in new golf and banquet events for the new event space to date. Everything from weddings to retirement parties with all different types of set-ups.

Alec asked if Ironhorse does all the catering or is that arranged.

Troy stated that there is a list of approved caterers, which is expandable. They confer with Troy and he orders it and arranges for it to be delivered. There is a markup on the outside catering, which is an internal service charge. It will be more of a turn-key/full service situation, which is much different from the Lodge. If it is a small group, eighty and under, we can produce it; or if it is a golf outing. Alcohol must be purchased from Ironhorse and cannot be brought in. This is due to the liquor license held by Troon. There are different packages that they can choose from, which are reasonable.

Council Liaison Sipple asked about the requirement for an officer when serving alcohol.

Troy acknowledged that this is correct. They are off duty Leawood officers.

Alec asked about booking for 2017 golf events and is the focus is now on 2018 events.

Troy stated that they are still booking a few golf events for September but they are focusing on going after renewed and new golf events for 2018. Wedding business is really booking about one year out and we are cost competitive. With this along with the bunker restoration and the new golf car fleet coming online in the next thirty days, Ironhorse should be very well situated to take full advantage of demand for event space and golf outings.

Troy stated that the course has introduced a new website format at www.ironhorsegolf.com. A new video has been incorporated on the main page and the user will have easier navigation of the site. It also allows for greater administration functions such as auto emailing and segmented email databases.

Marc asked to go back to the financials. He asked this question a year or two ago. Year-to-year comparisons of rounds played, doesn't really give you an accurate picture, as there are so many variables. A year in, we do a comparable. Is it possible if for no other line item but just for the

rounds played, can we compare it to a five-year rolling average. This would be a better picture of what direction we are really going. Most importantly is rounds played.

Troy stated that this could definitely be done moving forward.

Chair Fuller said the rounds number is the most confusing because of Triple Crown and other programs vs. dailies.

Troy stated that everyone that steps on the first tee is counted as a round, even Triple Crown because that is essentially a tee time taken. The other number talked about is revenue per round and this is where we hope to be able to move the needle up.

Marc stated that with dynamic pricing, he would be interested to see how that plays into the five-year average. How is it working? Does it bring value? This should all be looked at during the year-end meeting.

Troy stated that *Tee Times* magazine and *The Knot KC* wedding magazine will both be featuring articles on the new space event space and Troon corporate will be distributing a national press release around June 1 that will highlight the expansion and the bunker renovation project. The two wedding publications are really drawing interest to the facility and we are continuing to use social media as well.

Dick mentioned in regards to getting people out here, so many won't know it is here. Golfers will help spread the word but we need other methods.

Troy stated that they will have a couple of open houses. One for golf and one for social events. He is not sure if there will be specified times for tours like the Lodge does at this time or not. However, they will do a couple of designated nights in the next few months.

Alec said that he noticed from 2016-2017, the actual green fees were down but golf carts were up.

Troy stated that it is an allocation.

Chris said we are charging \$1.00 more for carts.

Troy shared the following 2017 upgrades in place for Golf Operations:

- EMV Compliant credit card processing machines
- Credit card processor at Driving range dispenser with \$6700 in sales so far.
- Golf Genius software with live scoring and mobile application
- New fleet of 74 golf cars on order including utility, beverage, and range picker carts.
(*New fleet will have USB charging ports for mobile devices*)

Troy gave credit to Mark Andrasik, soon to retire as the IT Director, for getting them all set up to be in compliance.

There will also be nineteen security cameras on the property. If you drive in the roundabout, we will be able to read your license plat from inside the clubhouse. There is a camera under the new space, at the entrance to the cart barn, and of course, behind the counters. There are also cameras on the first tee and the tenth tee boxes as well.

There will be no smoking on the new deck. It will be limited to the northwest exterior section outside the doors. This will keep the space clean and fresh and not interfere with guests who are eating or just enjoying the new outdoor space.

Troy described the type of seating that will be available on the new deck area.

Tommy asked about free rounds listed on the financial report. Is that high schools.

Troy said that this represents any free round, which includes high schools. Of all the places he has worked, Ironhorse gives away the fewest free rounds of golf.

III. Course Maintenance / Projects Report

James reported that his crew has completed the following projects since the last meeting in March:

- Installed landscape rock border along path at practice tees
- Installed drainage on hole #4 rough near the green
- Worked with contractor to remove trees on #10 behind green and on left side of #14. Trees on both also trimmed.
- Repaired irrigation leak on #12 red tee
- Capped damaged head on #2 behind green
- Took soil and water samples of Greens, Tees and Fairways. Soil samples were sent to ISTRC

Council Liaison Sipple asked what ISTRC stands for.

James replied it is International Sports Turf Research Center

Chuck asked if we send it to K-State like most others.

James stated that ISTRC does a more extensive test, even on the sand. Gives you a base where the greens are, how they are aging, and more including the amount of organic matter. Allows for more strategy on how to aerate. Organic matter needs to be closely watched.

- Aerated greens on March 21. Done early and they healed earlier.
- Parks department trimmed trees right of #5 green.
- Installed new cups, flags and flagsticks.
- Started bi-weekly topdressing and venting
- Re-installed fountains on #'s 6 and 11
- April, started bringing on some staff
- Most of the equipment came in in April. Still waiting on some items.
- Applied preventative on the zoysia
- Trying to keep things mowed now.
- Bunkers are performing very well freeing staff up to do other needed tasks.

Council Liaison Sipple asked how the players are responding to the white sand. Have there been any complaints.

James stated no, everyone is very complimentary about the white sand.

James reported that they will be working to get some irrigation lines in around the new expansion and then work with Dustin of parks to complete landscape and installation.

Council Liaison Sipple asked if flowers would be planted for brides photos.

Chris stated that there would be some areas with a mix of color, depending on the season. She will discuss with Dustin about the best options.

James reported that the course sustained some winterkill on surrounds so he has increased fertilizer to push growth. New sod will be added in larger areas. He will continue to work on improving the collars around the greens.

Chair Fuller commented that the course is in phenomenal shape. The collars still need attention.

IV. Business Plan

Chris stated that during the last review of the plan, the consensus was to keep the information in the plan to the details, which are most important. The financials are being reported monthly and they are reviewed at the meetings.

Troy agreed and stated that Troon took the higher points out of the previous plan, focusing on strategies and goals, and how they plan to achieve them. He pointed out the insurgence of Great Life Fitness into the golf market in the KC Metro area. They have had quite a few acquisitions over the last several years. We are looking at their business plan model. It is on our radar as a competitive set. Troon intends to provide the best product, best practice facility and best customer service at Ironhorse. The addition to the clubhouse will make a huge difference in the market. Fee wise, Sundays have become a little “softer” and this may be something we come to the committee about making adjustments on.

Council Liaison Sipple asked about other courses doing dynamic pricing on Sundays.

Troy stated there is a lot of dynamic pricing out in the market right now and not just on Sundays. He and his staff will continue to monitor these trends.

Marc asked if Great Life is an ownership group or a management group.

Troy replied it is an ownership group that manage their own facilities.

Alec has observed that they are not spending a lot of capital on their courses.

Troy stated that Ironhorse is also working to get out in front even further with technology options through GPS and other services. We need to make sure our golfers know what a value-add this is. It also works well on the golf shop side by letting us know where the carts are on the course and if they are behind pace of play.

Troy stated that they have already collected \$8,000 in credit card business at the range ball dispenser.

Dick asked about the suggested pass holder for 39 and under.

Troy stated that none of the current Triple Crown pass holders are under 40. Creating this category may spur interest from that age group. The strategy is that they will enjoy playing the course at that level then, move to the next category when they turn 40. He believes it is a glaring miss in the Triple Crown program. The price needs to be reasonable, as people in this age group are more busy with family activities and therefore don't have as much time to play golf. He will discuss with staff and present options for the 2018 fee schedule.

Troy reported that Ironhorse hosts five junior programs including The First Tee, US Kids, the Junior Camp, a Junior League and PGA Junior Golf, so we are very active with youth programs. Coming from other facilities, Ironhorse is truly committed to the Junior Program. They have also added a ladies league on Wednesday evenings that is in its second year. It is mostly social but it is a great way to get ladies out on the course.

Council Liaison Sipple asked about one of the objectives, the 4th one, the steward of the environment. This is good stuff. There are many people in Leawood interested in sustainability. Is there any way to promote this more at the course?

Alec noted that the course has the Audubon certification as well.

Troy stated that paperwork is currently being completed for recertification of this program. He will talk with them about getting some promotional items for use around the clubhouse.

James shared the different certifications that the course holds.

Chris stated that all this information would be good material for the “Did You Know” section in the Parks and Recreation Program guide that comes out twice per year.

Council Liaison Sipple stated that having photos of the wildlife and sharing information about the environmentally safe chemicals being used would be very well received.

James agreed and said he has some information in his office and will put together some kind of display in the clubhouse for the next season.

Council Liaison Sipple asked if they make an effort to educate the golfer about the benefit of being a Troon frequent player here at Ironhorse you could get these many points when golfing in Arizona or at other courses around the country.

Troy stated that they do promote it and they have quite a few players that will give them their Troon Rewards card when they check in at the Golf Shop. He will provide more handouts at the golf counter that will detail all the benefits.

Troy reported that Mitch Harrell, now the head of the Public Course Division of Troon, was supposed to come out and tour the course and attend the meeting but he was called to jury duty and selected. He will try to rebook his trip for some time this summer. He will also keep this property under his umbrella of courses.

Leo Morton joined the group at this time. He was detained at another meeting.

Council Liaison Sipple asked when the next meeting is scheduled.

Chris stated that it will be in October but a date certain has not yet been determined.

Troy asked Chris to share the City events that would be held in the new space.

Chris stated that the Leawood Foundation will hold a donor appreciation event here and the I-Lan Sister City Committee will be hosting the Lunar New Year dinner here. Both have already booked the space. The Leawood Chamber will host an after-hours event in August and the Kansas Recreation and Parks Association will host the 2017 golf tournament here in October.

Council Liaison Sipple asked if one of the art shows could be held here instead of the Lodge.

Chris stated that the space is probably not big enough

Dick said that we need to have an event for the golf committee, past and present members as well as the Governing Body members.

Chris agreed and said that we will also invite the top people from the contractor and engineers, as well as key City staff that worked to bring the project to fruition. It will probably be in June, depending on the Mayor’s schedule.

Chris asked Leo if he had time to read the information

Leo stated that the first event is to take place tomorrow. Coincidentally, it happens to be UMKC Law. He has seen the building during construction and agrees that the space turned out very nice.

Troy shared that the rental fees are typical for this market but not for what people would pay across the country. It will be a good revenue stream that will not have a lot of overhead attached to it, unlike other venues.

Chair Fuller asked if Troon has the ability during the off-season of January and February to adjust rates if needed to spur business.

Chris stated that this was done at the Lodge and it proved to be effective.

Troy said that one market they still need to tap in to is Fundraisers. They will pursue this moving forward.

Chair Fuller said fundraisers are usually pretty big groups.

Troy stated by the fire code, the occupancy is 251 but that would be very tight so we are telling folks the max is 225, while the Lodge holds 300 seated at tables.

Tommy asked if there is a minimum number for a group who wants to use the space.

Troy said that at this point, they do not. He explained the hourly rentals vs. the day rental for wedding and golf events.

Tommy Davidson mad the motion to adjourn the meeting.

Mark Bodine seconded the motion.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:40 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Chris Claxton
Director of Parks and Recreation